PEAKS OF SHALA

my poncho; then he carried me across—I was soaked in spray, but that did not matter. Then he put one arm around the donkey and supported it across, and then the saddle, and then he went back once more and took the protesting Rexh and brought him over. The water was above their waists; their white bodies slanted in the glassy current; three yards below them the water poured in a crystal mass over the edge of the pool, a second waterfall that struck in roaring foam fifty feet below.

The worst of the current was between me and the central rock where the byraktor was braced; several times the end man's feet slipped there, notably when he crossed with the donkey, which I gave up for lost, but each time the chain of hands held firm.

Their bodies came blue from the icy water, but they put on only their cotton underdrawers, for they said we would next go through the snow, and they did not want to get their beautifully embroidered trousers wet; for the same reason they left their purple, gold-embroidered socks and rawhide opangi in the packs, and went on barefoot.

"Good! If we're crossing the snow fields already, we'll surely be in Scutari by to-night," I said. But I was joyful too soon, for when we reached the first of the snow the party stopped. The byraktor sat down on a rock and lighted a cigarette; the gendarme, without a word, began to climb a tall cliff that overhung the trail.

PEAKS OF SHALA

• 622 What did it mean? Rexh did not know, and I sat impatiently on the mule, which began nosing through the snow for some bite to eat.

Then overhead the high, keen telephone call rang out, answered by far, thin voices that sounded as though the crystal air itself had been tapped, far away, by a giant finger. Even while the voices called and answered in the sky, silent men began to appear, suddenly, without my having noticed their approach. It was startling to see a strange, turbaned head beside my elbow, to find that between two glances a dignified, half-naked man was sitting on the rock beside the byraktor.

Rexh came and led the mule to a little distance. The figure of the gendarme, against the sky, raised its rifle, and I put my hands over my ears just in time to dull the echo crash. "It is polite to go away for a little distance, Mrs. Lane," said Rexh. "The byraktor has called a council of all chiefs of Shoshi."

[291] In half an hour twenty men surrounded the byraktor. They were all, like the byraktor and his gendarme, in cotton underdrawers, barefooted, and naked above the waist, many of them wearing on their heads only the tiny round white cap that covered their scalplocks. Each of them carried his rifle on a woven strap slung over his shoulder, and all had an arsenal in their sashes. They sat on small rocks, on the snow-filmed ground, in a group about the byraktor's bowlder.

PEAKS OF SHALA

We were at the mouth of the highest pass. ooo All around the little open space towered cliffs heavy with snow, only to the east the mountain ranges fell away, one beyond the other, to the just-suggested chasm of the Lumi Shala Valley, and beyond it they rose again, purple and blue and gray, to the foot of the great wave of snow that touched the sky—the wave that Alex and Frances and Perolli were climbing, if they had left Shala. A black cloud hanging over the pass they were to take told that they were traveling in a storm.

The council lasted half an hour, three quarters of an hour, an hour. It concerned grave matters; the earnestness of those intent bodies and keen faces said that. Meantime Rexh and I talked in low tones. [622]

"I am not paying the byraktor a hundred kronen to sit here while he holds a council," said I. "Do you think he intends to get me to Scutari to-night?"

"I do not think so, Mrs. Lane. But if you want to get there, it shall be done. We must consider many things." Rexh used his fingers to check them off. "First, the byraktor must be thinking a great deal about the new Tirana government. You remember that he asked the Shala man about Rrok Perolli. Also he talked a long time with his mother's mother, and that was about politics. Second, the byraktor holds a council. Therefore he is going to do something that concerns the tribe. The byraktor, you 622

*[See pp. 265-6 [267] -- Analyst]

PEAKS OF SHALA

know, is the war chief; he is the one who leads the tribe to war. Shoshi is in blood with Shala, and Shala has sworn a *besa* with the Tirana government. We must think of all these things. Now I think that the byraktor is also in blood with some of the tribes along the Kiri River, between here and Scutari. I think that he has hired you the mule so that he can travel in safety with you through those tribes and get to Scutari, where he will inquire about the Tirana government and whether it intends to join Shala in war against Shoshi. That is what I think."

I looked at that twelve-year-old lad in amazement and admiration. "Well, Rexh," I said, humbly, "I must leave it to you to get me to Scutari to-night, somehow. You think the byraktor intends to stop along the way?"

"Yes, Mrs. Lane. Also I think that the Shala man does not want to reach Scutari to-night. He swears earnestly, but I think he is a serpent with a forked tongue."

I sat there on the donkey, appalled. "But, Rexh, you know that I must get to Scutari to-night. Tell them I have said it. I am of the American tribe, and what Americans say they will do, they do. To-night I get to Scutari!"

"Yes, Mrs. Lane. But one must not tell all one thinks. We will say nothing. We will see."

When the council was ended we went on leisurely through the pass, and down into valleys, and up again over other mountains. At two o'clock we left behind the last glimpse of the

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

reduced to the lowest conditions, as the Antariatæ, Ardæi, and Dardani among the Illyrians, and the Triballi among the Thracians."

"Augustus burnt them down"—but their descendants survived. Many a Balkan tribesman became a Roman Emperor, and Rome no longer rules the Balkans. A race is seldom, if ever, extirpated. Probably many of our conquered races will survive the British Empire.

Strabo, going southward, mentions—in the Bocche di Cattaro—the city Rhizon (Risano), then Lissus (Alessio) and Dyracchium (Durazzo), with much detail regarding climate, crops, and population. Of great interest is his exact definition of the frontier where Greece begins, putting it much farther south than the present one. He describes the Epirote tribes, Threspoti, Cassiopæi, Amphilochi, and Molotti, and says as you sail into the Ambracian gulf (the gulf of Prevesa), on the south side are the Greeks and the temple of Apollo Actius, and on the north are "the Cassiopæi, an Epirote tribe extending as far as the recesses of the gulf. The Amphilochi are Epirotes, as are all those who inhabit the rugged country situate above and close to the Illyrian mountains. . . . With the Epiroti are mixed the Illyrian nations, some of whom are situate on the southern side of the mountains." He names eleven more tribes and states: "Formerly each of these nations was under its own Prince, save the Enchelii, whose chiefs descended from Cadmus and Harmonia. . . . The Molotti were subjects of Pyrrhus Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, and his descendants, who were Thessalians. The rest were governed by native princes. Some tribes were continually striving to obtain mastery over others, but were finally subdued by the Macedonians. They gave the name of Upper Macedonia to the country above Lyncestis, Pelagonia, Orestias, and Elimia. . . . Some writers extend the name Macedonia to all the land as far as Corcyra (Corfu), assigning as reason the mode of cutting the hair, their language, their use of the chlamys, and similar things in which they resemble the Macedonians. Some of them, however, speak two tongues. On the dissolution of Macedonia they fell under the Roman power. . . . At that time the whole of Epirus was well peopled . . . at present a great part is uninhabited, and the inhabited parts are in the state of villages or in ruins. Even the oracle of Dodona is deserted. . . . Persons who hold office among the Thesproti and Molotti are called *Peligones*, as among the Macedonians. . . . The country now called Macedonia was formerly called Emathia."

This is a lucid account of the tribal conditions at the beginning of the Christian era, conditions not yet quite dead. Traces of the language common to these Macedonian, Epirote, and Illyrian people are still found in Albania. "E Mathia" means "The Great." The Albanian tribe still has a nominal chieftain, and is ruled by a council of "pelaki"

2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1

(peligones). Lychnidis, the Roman name for the lake of Ochrida, is possibly the Albanian "Licheni," a lake. And the Molotti, or Molossi, may mean mountain men, as does the Albanian Maltsor, from Maltsia mountains. (Usually incorrectly spelt Malessori, an Italianized form, it being against the principles of Italian to put "lt" together.)

The Romans drove the Illyrian tribes into rugged ground. Similarly in North Albania of to-day the tribes owe their continued existence in a great part to the mountains. Conquerors always take the fat lands, leaving the lean to the conquered—if they leave them any. That many descendants of the ancient people survived is shown by the tradition to-day in the mountains that "Latini" or "Pagani" or "Anas" were living on the lands when the ancestors of the present tribes arrived. "Anas" is Albanian for "indigenous."

Roughly speaking, the man who tilled the soil and who herded beasts has been rudely displaced three times on the west side of the Balkan peninsula. (1) By the invading Roman. (2) By the invading Serb. (3) By the invading Turk.

The history of the present tribes is mainly that of the third displacement. Each tribe has a tale of origin. Unfortunately first the Balkan wars of 1912–13 and then the Great War interrupted and ended my work before I had collected them all. I give such details as I gathered.

The Albanian tribe (Fis) descends from one male ancestor (or several). All persons tracing descent from the same male ancestor, no matter how distant, are reckoned "brothers and sisters," and are not intermarriageable. The law of exogamy is most strictly observed. The heads of families know by heart surprisingly long pedigrees—knowledge of great importance, as both marriage and blood vengeance are regulated by consanguinity. We may be certain that groups which will not intermarry have in truth a common male ancestor. Women do not count. The child, I was told, has none of its mother's blood. Whence it follows that tribes which continually intermarry because they have not a common male ancestor are, in fact, often very closely related on the female side, having given daughters to, and taken wives from, each other for generations. But they jeered at me heartily when I suggested this.

Tribal instinct is far stronger than Church law. Many of these exogamous tribes are Catholic. The Catholic Church prohibits the marriage of second cousins—but no further. I asked an Albanian Franciscan, a tribesman himself, how he reconciled this with his strongly expressed opinion that to marry "one's own blood," however remote, was incest. "Suppose some fourth or fifth cousins asked you to marry them, could you, as priest, refuse?" He was much upset.

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

000 weeks, so that his appreciation of events was necessarily tentative. He saw little hope, however, of reconciling Zogists and Partisans, and believed that our Headquarters gravely underrated the difficulties of bringing Abas Kupi back into the fight. Hare's state of health, as well as his length of service in Albania, would fully have entitled him to seek evacuation; and indeed we had been ordered to relieve both him and Seymour. We judged, however, that his support would be a great strength to us and easily prevailed on him to remain. Seymour also volunteered to stay to help ensure continuity of policy.

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•[622] THE evening after we had reached Derye we received the visit of Kiamil, the headman of the village, who had protected and provided for the British Mission during the anxious winter months. Kiamil was an Albanian of the old school, dressed in a handsome, dark-blue cloak and remarkable by the extraordinary whiteness of his hands. He was indeed afflicted with a curious complex, whereby he felt impelled to wash his hands and mouth every hour of the day, a proceeding which excited the wonder of the villagers, though without in any degree inducing their emulation. He spoke Turkish, Arabic, and a little French, having studied at Salonika; and was eager for news of the Near East where he had travelled as a young man. A pious Moslem he would touch no alcohol, and in any case refused to take food or drink outside his own house. He greeted us with the old-fashioned salaam, discussed general topics for half an hour, and then delivered a message from Abas Kupi to say that he had learned of our arrival, and was on his way to meet us.

* 669 648 Abas Kupi duly reached Derye on the following evening 1/1 with a force of about a hundred men. He put off meeting us that night, pleading fatigue from the march, but came next morning to the house where we were lodged, accompanied by a few armed bodyguards. He was dressed now in riding-

1/1 [late April, 1944 -- Analyst]

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

wiser to play a deserter's part to the end. Twice he went to Scutari, ostensibly to obtain information for Neel, but really to learn the latest news of the fighting in the west from his German colleagues. For several days he continued undecided, but meanwhile the Turkomans grew impatient of the primitive guerilla life which they shared with the British Mission. They saw no difficulty in capturing the British officers, and were hungry, besides, for the rewards they had been promised when they should bring them back as prisoners. Early one morning, therefore, they formed up to Brandt and pressed for permission to seize Neel and his staff at once. Brandt tried to put them off, but they demanded an immediate decision; and he now made up his mind to go over to the British. He therefore went and roused Neel, who was still sleeping, to explain the situation to him.

"It was very early, and a beastly morning," Neel afterwards told me, "and there was old Fred telling me that he was a Lieut.-Colonel in the Hun Secret Service. It was a bit of a shock, don't you know."

Neel recovered, however, from his surprise, and after drinking a cup of tea the two went out together to meet the Turkomans. A brief harangue, seconded by a liberal donative, secured their allegiance; and for the next four months they did stout service in the Allied cause.

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RIDDLE's reports and our talks with the Dibran chiefs had convinced us that we must enlist the support of Muharrem Bairaktar, and we therefore decided to push on northwards to meet him. Muharrem was the lord of Liuma, the wild territory to the east of the Black Drin, and was reputed worth more than a thousand rifles. His influence, moreover, extended beyond the borders of his region, both into Dibra, as we had seen for ourselves, and into the lands north of the White Drin. The word *Bairaktar* means "standard bearer" in Albanian, but by a natural association of ideas it has become the usual title

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

of a tribal chief among the Ghegs. Muharrem's whole clan, however, was surnamed *Bairaktari*, from an incident in the eleventh century, when the Liuman chief of the day had been elected general of a confederation of northern tribes. In more recent times the fortunes of the clan had declined, and it was only under Muharrem's chieftainship that it had returned to its ancient supremacy in the valley of the Black Drin.

Muharrem had first come into prominence in the revolt of 1924, when he had raised Liuma for Zog and had outflanked the government forces concentrated in Dibra. As a reward he had been made one of the quadrumvirate, with Fikri Dine, Prenk Previsi, and Jemal Herri, to whom Zog had entrusted the pacification of North Albania. He had received the command of the Kukes military district, and had skilfully exploited this position to consolidate his personal influence in Liuma and extend it to the surrounding regions. But once the monarchy had been solidly established, the King had regarded the mission of the quadrumvirs as fulfilled and had determined to reduce the power which they already threatened to abuse. Accordingly, in 1933, he had appointed Muharrem as his A.D.C., an empty promotion which deprived him of his military command and kept him in Tirana, away from the seat of his influence. Muharrem was not the man to submit quietly to such gilded servitude, and, fired by jealousy and ambition, had plotted with the Captain of Mirdita and the Yugoslav Government to overthrow the King. The conspiracy, however, had been betrayed, and, warned of his impending arrest, Muharrem had fled to Liuma to raise the standard of revolt. He could scarcely have expected to defeat the government forces alone, but, with the support of the Captain of Mirdita and the intervention of the Yugoslavs, he still hoped to obtain honourable terms from Zog. Marko Joni, however, had lost heart, and, abandoned by his ally, Muharrem had crossed into Yugoslavia to begin the cycle of exile which was to lead him in turn to Belgrade, Vienna, and Paris.

Exile is perhaps the hardest test which a political leader can face; for it deprives him of those correctives of custom and

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

000 public opinion which at home insensibly guide and restrain his actions. He becomes a general without an army, beholden to foreign governments, and, living in a mental climate where ideas tend naturally to the abstract and extreme because no longer rooted in the daily needs of political supporters. Men of wide interests and philosophic bent may, like Louis Napoleon or Lenin, improve the enforced leisure of exile ; but Muharrem Bairaktar was a primitive highland chief, and in the crowded capitals of Europe was deprived of his bearings. His natural wariness was turned into persecution mania by the petty café intrigues of political *émigrés* ; and the interest which he aroused by his picturesque ways swelled his ambition until he saw himself not merely as ruler of Albania but as the man predestined to unite the Balkan peoples.

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His exile had fortunately been short, and, in 1939, he had taken advantage of the general amnesty to return to Albania. He had declined, however, to take any part in public life and had retired to his stronghold in Liuma, refusing all contact with the occupation authorities. During the summer of 1940 he had corresponded with Gani Kryeziu in Belgrade, and, in April 1941, had mobilised to support the attempted revolt of the United Front. After its failure he had remained inactive, except for some communication with General Mihailovitch, but, with the collapse of Italy, he had suddenly raised his clan and captured Kukes. Kukes commands the junction of the Black with the White Drin and the vital bridges on the road from Prizren to Scutari. The Germans had therefore sent considerable forces to recover the town ; and Muharrem, realising that resistance was hopeless, had agreed to retire without fighting on condition that no German troops should enter Liuma. The region had thus never been occupied by the Germans; and Muharrem had afforded shelter through the winter to Riddle's Mission, as well as to isolated groups of Partisans. The Germans must have known of these things through their spies, but they kept to their agreement. They were well aware, indeed, of the difficulties of tracking down lone British officers in the tangled mountains of Liuma, and with the small forces at their disposal hesitated to provoke Muhar-

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

rem's open hostility. Their aim was to keep Muharrem neutral; ours was now to bring him back into the war.

We left Riddle's base on the 29th of May, and, just before sunset, climbed on to the range that forms the eastern wall of the Drin gorges. The powerful river lay two thousand feet below us, narrowly compressed between smooth black cliffs, through which its deep and swirling waters ran a vivid blue, stained by the copper deposits in the rock. Beyond the jagged peaks of Liuma towered into the sky, and, with the approach of darkness, the scene became awe-inspiring, almost Wagnerian. We followed a narrow path scratched in the face of the cliff above the river, and now and then passed little stone cairns beside it. Each marked a grave and guarded the bones of some traveller who had fallen to his blood enemy, lying in wait. The dead were buried where they had been killed; for the path was too steep and the way too long to bring their bodies home for funeral.

Night overtook us on the march, but we pressed on until we came to a cluster of buildings, surrounded by a high crenellated wall. This was Muharrem's castle. Our guards called out and beat upon the gates, and, after an exchange of shouts with shadowy figures on the battlements, we were admitted to a wide courtyard. In front of us was a stone building, founded on a rock, and on the steps leading up to it stood the lord of Liuma, with a bodyguard beside him holding a torch of blazing pinewood. He bowed to us, introducing himself as Bairaktar, and led the way indoors to a room furnished with tables and upholstered chairs, the first I had seen in Albania. There we sat down for the customary exchange of greetings; and presently coffee was brought.

Muharrem was of stocky build, dressed in a plain grey uniform with a lumberjack's leather cap on his head. He looked not unlike Kaiser Wilhelm, with the same iron grey hair and moustache, loose mouth, and small piercing eyes. When at rest there was an almost abnormal concentration in his gaze, and sometimes a sly smile would cross his face, as if prompted by his inward thoughts. He was reserved of speech

[British liaison officers -- Analyst]

[Muharrem Bairaktar, chieftain of Liuma clan -- Analyst]

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

and while it was made ready were entertained by two old men who sang to us the strident epics of the highlands, accompanied on the one-stringed *guzla*. We climbed on after we had eaten, but the path now wound ever steeper through the woods and we lost our way several times in the moonless night. Climbing was hot work, but we lit fires wherever we halted, for at that height the night air was still bitterly cold. At last, just before dawn, we crawled over the crest of the range and came out on to a broad and undulating stretch of moorland. We continued marching till the sun had warmed the morning and then dropped asleep in the bracken, where we lay till the afternoon.

We resumed our journey in the evening and an hour after dark reached the tall stone keep of Mehmet Ali, the *Bairaktar* of Hass. There our strength was revived with lashings of a potent *raki* ; and, while the meal was made ready, our hunger was stayed by *mese* of eggs and cheese. Mehmet Ali was an old-fashioned tribal chief, a cheery fellow, and an excellent host. He was reputed the most prudent man in all Albania and had persistently refused to disclose the name of the friend who had sheltered him in the Balkan wars thirty years before.

"You never know," he would say, "when I may need to hide with his family again!"

Towards midnight the sudden barking of the watch-dogs warned us that strangers were at the gate. Mehmet Ali went out to meet them and presently returned, ushering two men into the room. The first of these was Said Kryeziu, a sub-machine-gun slung across his shoulder and two hand-grenades dangling from his belt. Prison had left its mark on him, and his face was thin and drawn. He shook hands gravely with the assembled company and was just murmuring some formal greeting to me when a flash of recognition crossed his face and we fell into each other's arms. He had received no word that I was in Albania, and now this sudden reunion in the mountains seemed to both of us like a good omen. Perhaps we were at last to fulfil the work we had begun together in Belgrade.

Said brought us the best news we had heard since landing in Albania. His brother, Gani, had just fought an engagement with the Germans, the third in recent weeks. At last we had

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

*669 should have crossed again. He led us to the shade of some trees where carpets from a neighbouring house had been spread for our conference. The hardships of internment had aged him, but they had also given him strength, and there was now a more determined look in his eyes than I had ever seen in Belgrade.

• [622] With Gani were representatives of the Kosmet Partisans and a number of Moslem chiefs, including Salimani, the *Bairaktar* of Krasniqi. Salimani stood over six feet tall, a fierce old warrior with strong, regular features and thick, silver [291] hair and moustache. He was dressed in close-fitting, white breeches and a dark-blue jacket, with a white skull-cap on his head and a scarlet sash around his waist. His gun was silver-handled, a silver lanyard hung from his neck, and the tobacco pouch on his belt was of filigree worked by the Scutari silversmiths. He was over eighty years old, but bore himself erect, and his voice was still clear and strong. His clan had long been in blood with the Kryezius; for Gani's brother, Tsena, had pursued Bairam Tsuri, a rival northern chief, into Krasniqi and there had driven him to suicide. But now the two were reconciled, for that winter Salimani's only son had been killed fighting against the Germans in the ranks of the Partisans. The new feud obscured the old, and, in the face of a common foe, the two clans had laid aside their ancient enmity.

We sat down cross-legged under the trees, and, with Said acting as interpreter, began our conversations with Gani. Meanwhile the other chiefs rested around us in a semicircle, listening. Our first instinct had been to bid them withdraw, that we might talk in privacy, but Said had dissuaded us, arguing that nothing would impress the chiefs so much as to see us reach agreement in public. Gani therefore told us of his recent fights with the Germans and stressed that only lack of arms and ammunition had prevented him from taking the offensive on a wider scale. Then, with a gesture of invitation he said:

"I have come to receive your orders."

We answered along familiar lines that the time had now

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

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OUR meeting with Gani Kryeziu had taken us farther afield than we had at first intended; it was already the 6th of June, and we were due back at base next day for talks with Abas Kupi. To return by the way we had come would take us more than a week; but the only short cut — and this would take at least four days — lay through the wild highlands of Mirdita. This was the most primitive region in all Albania and firmly in the grip of Jon Marko Joni, the Captain of the Mirdites and the ally of the Germans. Gani and Muharrem begged us not to attempt the journey, and, when they saw that our minds were made up, offered to put a force of a hundred men at our disposal, so that, if necessary, we might fight our way through any opposition. To feed such a force, however, might well prove impossible, especially if the clansmen were hostile. We therefore determined to put our trust in speed rather than strength, hoping to be in Mati before Marko Joni learned that we had crossed Mirdita.

We rested, therefore, through the morning and afternoon of the 6th June and, bidding Gani farewell, set out at sunset with Said and Muharrem Bairaktar. The nights are short at this season, but we planned to cross both the Great Drin and the Scutari–Kukes road before dawn. The river was too deep and swift to ford, and there was no alternative but to cross by the ferry. This was guarded, however, by a gendarmerie post under a new commandant, whose attitude was still unknown to the local chieftains. We reached the crossing about midnight and Muharrem deployed his men so as to surround the gendarmes. He then sent for the commandant and exhorted him as a patriotic Albanian to help our forces over the Drin. Intimidated by our array, and encouraged by a handful of gold, that officer soon discovered a vehement sympathy for the Allied cause; the necessary orders were issued to the ferryman, and within half an hour our forces were across the river.

An hour beyond the Drin our paths divided; Muharrem turned eastwards on his way back to Liuma; and the rest of

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

000 "Where the Captain leads, I will follow."

We stretched out on his mud floor and slept a couple of hours, but then pressed on, not wishing to stay there long enough for news of our presence to reach Marko Joni. Our short rest had stiffened rather than refreshed us, but that night, at about ten o'clock, after a march of altogether twenty-two hours, we crawled into a low stone fortress near the village of Konai. There we were hospitably entertained by a cousin of Marko Joni, who inclined, however, to the Zogist cause. The •622 company that evening included Res Lufi, a chieftain from the borders of Mati and Mirdita, who was renowned for the success [628] with which he waged his blood feuds. Next day we were to pass a well where, some years earlier, he had drowned six of his blood enemies whom he had taken in their sleep.

000 From Konai the path to Mati led through Oroshi, the seat of the Abbot of Mirdita, and one of Marko Joni's strongholds. We judged it more prudent, therefore, to make a slight detour and set out in the morning to climb the Mali Shengjit, or Mount Saint John, a broad, wooded massif which separates the regions of Mirdita and Lura. The day was fine, but we made slow progress; for the going was rough and the men nearing the limit of endurance. In the late afternoon, however, we descended into Lura and stopped by the side of the path to smoke and chat with a farmer returning from the market. He spoke for some time of local politics and then added as an afterthought:

"They said in the market that Rome has fallen and that the English have landed in France!"

Our bodyguards greeted the news with wild shouts and fired their rifles into the air; the old man was embraced by all and sundry; and we left him still sitting by the roadside, bewildered that anyone should be excited by news of these distant events.

We pushed on next morning through the barren gorges of Matsukull and in the evening reached Sul Kurti's house on the fringes of the Mati valley. We found old Sul sitting on a carpet in his orchard enjoying the last hours of daylight with one of his sons. This young man had come from Tirana only the day before, and from him we learnt details of the battle in France. That night Sul gave us a banquet in honour of the landing and

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

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622

GANI KRYEZIU AND HIS STAFF

(*Front row, from Right to Left*) Said Kryeziu, Hasan Kryeziu, Lazar Fundo, Gani Kryeziu, Captain Hibbert-Hoare

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

665 [625] stiffened by a handful of German deserters and fugitives from the labour gangs of the Todt Organisation. We had not previously met Jemal, for his relations with Abas Kupi were strained, and he had for some time been sulking in his tent. We knew, however, that he was in daily contact with Tirana and were anxious to enlist his support in disrupting the political manœuvres of the Germans.

[622] He entertained us to lunch in the house of a village *hoja* and supplemented the usual hospitality of the mountains with highly spiced Yugoslav dishes specially prepared for us by his Bosnian mistress. In appearance he was a cross between Mussolini and Mephistopheles, with a powerful cast of face, ruthless yet somehow mask-like, malicious, and smooth. His violent temperament was curbed by iron self-control and disguised by an elaborate courtesy which might have seemed unctuous but for a hint of arrogance. In conversation he damned Abas Kupi with faint praise, seeking to drive a wedge between us and suggesting that we should send him supplies as an independent leader. We turned a guarded answer, but prevailed on him to send an urgent message to Fikri Dine, advising him to decline Neubacher's invitation to form a government.

000 In the afternoon Hare left for Shupal to persuade Abas Kupi to send a similar warning to Fikri. Meanwhile Maclean and I pressed across the valley and reached Bastar about midnight, only to find that Smiley had moved the camp. We therefore rode out along the range and, at 2 A.M., came on the new base, situated by the side of a gurgling stream on the edge of a broad, level clearing in the forest. We roused Smiley from his slumbers and when at last the flow of his curses had subsided he told us that he had good news: Headquarters had telegraphed approving the terms of our agreement with Abas Kupi. Now at last the revolt might begin.

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61 648 NEXT morning, the last of June, we reviewed our situation and judged it satisfactory. Headquarters had already ratified

1 [i.e. Jemal Herri, former chief of Zogist secret police--Analyst]

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

000 maintained a regular correspondence, we only once saw the Agha in the whole period between 26th July and 13th August. We continued, however, to work out plans for his journey to Italy but, in spite of several reconnaissances, were at last obliged to abandon hope of an evacuation by sea. Nor were we more successful in our attempts to arrange for him to be flown out; for the R.A.F. rejected the different landing-grounds we proposed, as well as a suggestion that a seaplane might pick us up on Lake Scutari.

622 Meanwhile we maintained close relations with Jemal Herri, who was the paramount influence in the region where we were encamped. Jemal had now embarked on the greatest conspiracy of a life devoted to intrigue. The seat of his influence was near to Tirana, and he had long nourished the design of attempting a *coup de main* on the capital in the moment when the Germans withdrew. Hitherto he had held his hand, for timing was of the essence of his plan; but now some substance was lent to the perennial rumours of a German withdrawal by the sudden evacuation of their wounded. Jemal therefore prepared to strike and, encouraged by the presence of a British Mission in his territory, strove to rally to his cause dissident Zogists and Ballists, disappointed "collaborationists", and renegade Partisans. These intrigues were conducted from Jemal's new and comfortable house at Zali Herrit, built, so it was said, with the gold which he had robbed from the British Missions.

We paid several visits to this house; for it had become a useful centre of information, and a meeting-place for men of all parties. Lunching there one day, I found Osman Taroku, a German spy whom we had unsuccessfully tried to liquidate some weeks before. Few secrets are kept for long in Albania; and I have no doubt that Osman knew of our intentions towards him. He showed no sign, however, of embarrassment and, after lunch, challenged me to a game of chess. I have never been much of a chess player, but found on this occasion that the contest derived a special savour from the knowledge that we were hunting each other in real life as well as on the board.

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

At the beginning of the civil war our rear base at Murait had been overrun by the Germans. We knew that some of its personnel had found refuge with the Partisans, but had remained without news of Merret and Sergeants Jones and Jenkins. We had begun to fear that they must have perished, or been taken prisoner, when, at the beginning of August, Merret walked into our camp, followed next day by the two sergeants and a crowd of Italian camp-followers. Merret now told us that their base had been overrun by the Germans and Partisans in turn. Caught between these two fires they had withdrawn into the forests of Lura, where they had eked out a precarious and frugal existence until the retreat of the Partisans had enabled them to join the Zogist forces near Matsukull. Save for Sergeant Jones, who was suffering from a bad bout of malaria, they seemed none the worse for their experience; and Merret now set out to make a close reconnaissance of Tirana airfield.

We remained a fortnight encamped beneath the olive trees, waiting for instructions from Headquarters and revolving plans for our uncertain future. A few political leaders came out to see us from Tirana, all imploring British intervention to end the civil war. We heard them patiently, but turned guarded answers, for we were now as ignorant of British intentions as they. Among other visitors came Kiamil, the headman of Derye, who had sheltered Hare and Seymour through the winter. Kiamil had sought to remain neutral during the civil war, but the Partisans could not forgive his close association with the British and had burnt down his house and carried off his cattle — in all some two hundred sheep and eight cows. Robbed of all his substance, he was on his way to Tirana to seek the hospitality of a merchant whom he had once befriended. We could only hope that this earlier act of kindness would be better rewarded than had been his service to the Allied cause.

Each day brought its visits, and much time was spent in the questioning of couriers and spies. Meanwhile kind sympathisers brought us French and Italian books from Tirana to

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

amuse our leisure; and an old Turkish lady, an aunt of Said Kryeziu, sent us sweetmeats worthy of Haji Bekir, which she had made for us herself.

In these long hours of waiting Said won our respect by his coolness and sincerity, and our friendship by his sense of humour and understanding. His Western education brought us closer to him than to most of his compatriots; and the objective quality of his mind enabled him to discuss dispassionately the problems of his country. By conviction a Social Democrat, his sympathies had at first inclined towards the Partisans and he had publicly rebuked Abas Kupi for his reluctance to attack the Germans. But he could not condone Enver Hoja's unprovoked attack against the Zogists, and had been deeply shocked by the deliberate destruction of the homes of the Mati *Beys*. He saw now that the Partisans were bent on establishing a regime no less dictatorial than that of the Fascists, and began to fear that the last state of his country might be worse than the first. For us, as British officers, the civil war presented practical problems to be primarily considered in terms of the war with Germany and the protection of British interests. For Said, as an Albanian patriot, it raised moral issues of transcending importance, and brought him face to face with the great ideological division of Europe which the war against Fascism had masked but not healed. At times his disgust with both sides made him long to return to Jakova to escape from politics and serve as a soldier in his brother's forces. He was convinced, however, that only the British could safeguard his country's independence and so agreed, though reluctantly, to stay with us.

7

In the early hours of the 11th August I felt a hand on my shoulder and woke up to hear Maclean saying:

"Tell me what you make of this: it sounds like trouble for someone."

I propped myself up on my elbow and listened in silence, while the sound of firing broke in on the stillness of the night.

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

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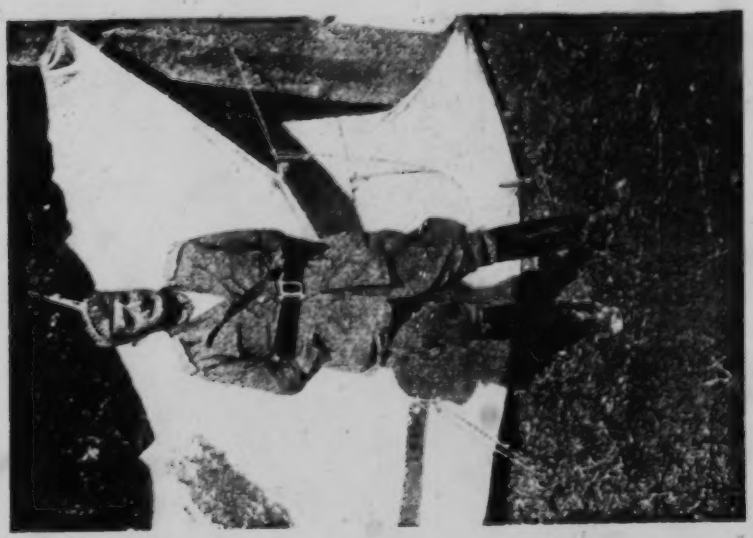

GENERAL PRENK PREVISI,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ALBANIAN ARMY

622

IHSAN BEY TOPTANI

[-244a]

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

EPILOGUE

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Two days later we were back in London; our mission was ended; and we could only repeat what Bismarck had once observed to the German candidate for a Balkan throne: "It will always have been an experience." A month passed in holiday; and within six weeks I was flying out to China to try my luck again. Maclean and Smiley were soon to follow.

So ended our connection with the Albanian revolt; and I will now dismiss this melancholy tale with a brief account of the fate of its protagonists. The Agha, his two sons, Gaitcho Goga and Ramiz, have joined their king in Egypt. Said Kryeziu and Ihsan Toptani are in Rome. Of the Ballist leaders, Midhat Frasheri and Ali Klissura escaped from Scutari in a river barge and crossed the Adriatic with two hundred of their adherents. Nureddin Vlora and the Pasha, his brother, made good their escape through Vienna. Abas Ermenye, their gallant commander, hid for a time in the South, and later escaped to Greece. There he has since been joined by General Prenk Previsi and by Fikri Dine. The old Captain of Mirdita came by devious ways to Rome, and has found safety in the shadow of the Vatican. Of Mustafa Kruya there is no certain news, but rumour has it that his timely conversion to the Roman faith has been rewarded by the protection of a cloister.

Not all escaped. Gani Kryeziu returned to Jakova when the Germans had gone, and, believing that Said was still with Enver Hoja, requested a safe-conduct to Tirana from the Partisan authorities. He was at once arrested, and, since Jakova is within the frontiers of Yugoslavia, found himself Marshal Tito's prisoner. He was arraigned before a "people's court" and condemned to five years' hard labour on charges of "reactionary tendencies" and of "exposing the people to German reprisals". His brother, Hassan, was lured meanwhile into the Partisan headquarters at Jakova, on the pretence that Gani had sent for him. He was never seen alive again.

7: Amery G-5 (1943-44) 1948 EG1 Albania EG1

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The promise of a general amnesty enticed the Zogist chiefs into Tirana. All were arrested, and many have been shot, among them our friends: Sul Kurti, Murad Basha, Dule Allemani, and Yussuf Chelai. Nor has the persecution ceased with the murder of the chiefs; and the wretched Shaqir has been sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment, simply because he served as our interpreter.

In Mirdita the Captain's two sons, Mark and Skender, long sustained the resistance of their clans. Mark was at last betrayed by his brother-in-law, who broke the sacred laws of hospitality and shot him while he slept. Skender now bears the tribal standard alone, and has avenged his brother's death by the extermination of the murderer, his own sister, and their children to the last babe.

The man-hunt still goes on, and its attendant skirmishes, denunciations, and intrigues fan the flames of popular discontent. For close on two years Muharrem Bairaktar defied the Partisans from the fastnesses of Liuma before escaping to Greece. Since then, small bands of outlaws have appeared on the borders of Mati; and Halit Kola is said to be among their leaders. The Partisans themselves are torn by feuds; and old Tsen Elezi has deserted Enver Hoja with all his clan and taken the familiar road to the mountains. Once more, as in 1941, the guerillas are little more than groups of hunted men, but they have sown the seeds of a new resistance movement. It will ripen with the perennial struggle of the Powers and sooner or later the harvest of hate must be reaped. Blood calls for blood in the mountains, and one day the tribes will take their revenge.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

a first-born may be inefficient, the mantle of a dead or dying head falls on the son who in the opinion of all the adult males in the household is the best fitted to keep it together, irrespective of whether he is the eldest or not.[1] This combination of birth and unanimity of choice gives these heads the strength of inevitability, so that they can be neither envied nor rebelled and intrigued against, but must be recognized and implicitly obeyed by their subordinates—a most important factor in keeping the peace.

Before the Turks left in 1912, the headship of a northern village or tribe descended in the same family, always to the head it had chosen for itself. Since 1912 successive Albanian governments have slightly modified this system. In non-tribal areas like Mat, Martanesh and Shpat there has been less need for a change; as far back as we can go, the head of the average village or group of villages has been elected by the community for his personal qualities in the same way as the head of a house. A few villages of Mat, however, had long been ruled by the landlords (*begs* or *beys*) who owned them; after 1912 the power of these landlords, the Zogu family excepted, was curtailed by the central government like that of the bajraktars of the north.

In the old days the laws were administered as well as enacted or revised by the ruling rank, who were collectively known as elders. The system was elaborate, with public trials over which elders presided, and at which evidence was taken from witnesses on oath as well as from the plaintiff and the accused, and a jury might be asked to render a verdict. Fines were the usual penalty for petty misdemeanours, and temporary banishment, permanent expulsion or death for serious offences; a modified form of imprisonment also existed. Offences against the cohesion of the social fabric, as understood by the mountaineers, were reckoned more serious than crimes against an individual. Thus parricide was graver than fratricide; the first struck a blow at parental authority, an essential part of the social structure, but since one brother had no right to rule another except in special cases, fratricide was little worse than an ordinary murder and hardly a public concern.[2] The murder of a neighbour or the theft of his property seldom entered the serious category until the criminal became an habitual offender. Then the community, regarding the man as a social menace from whom none of its members was safe, took whatever action the law laid down for his case.

[1] See Chapter V.

[2] See Chapter V, p. 38.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

escorting him to town, guarding him during his stay there and escorting him home again. If they refused without justifiable cause to give him such service, he withdrew his support from them at least for a time.

The bajraktar was also much occupied with local administration. Here he was assisted by one or more headmen, hereditary officials like himself. Independently or together, he and they checked quarrelling, judged and formulated new laws. He was admittedly their superior, and when their views diverged his prevailed. If pressure of work made him think an increase in their number desirable, he had power to make extra appointments provided only that he first submitted the names of his nominees to the Turkish government for approval. In short, he was the acknowledged head of the local administration.

As supreme administrative head the bajraktar had power to summon a general meeting for administrative as well as military purposes. If the matter at issue was important and affected the whole tribe, he sent the *kasnec* (tribal messenger) to command the presence of one man per house. If narrower issues were involved he summoned only one or more headmen and the local *gjobtarë* (fine-collectors) or other elders. Plenary meetings dealt with anti-social acts grave enough to involve the death penalty or expulsion, judged cases of sacrilege against the church, tightened up tribal discipline by enacting new or re-enacting old laws, decided whether to revolt or not against the Turkish government, and heard important messages from the government. In 1908 a plenary meeting[1] was held by each tribe to decide whether or not it should accept the Young Turk Constitution. Smaller meetings handled business where fines were sufficient punishment for transgression. Notably they regulated grazing rights, fixing the day for a general move to summer pastures, stipulating how many animals each family might feed on a common. They also regulated wood-cutting rights and controlled the supply of water for irrigation. The bajraktar presided at all such meetings, took an active part in the deliberations, and signed or set his seal on any minutes that were kept. He and the elders, as being socially superior, sat apart from the commoners. In the Malësi e Madhe he sat on the ground while the tribesmen stood respectfully on their feet.

[1] See M. E. Durham, *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans*, p. 74.

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGI Albania EGI

692 If the commoners did not like one of his[1] even if made in concert with the headmen and elders, they were
[622] not bound to abide by it and could compel him to re-examine the case. Neither he nor a headman could, singly or in combination, fine a tribesman without first securing authority from the tribe. After all, he and the headman might have a personal grudge against the man and might fine him for no other reason. To take an example
[619] from the non-tribal valley of Bulqizë, Miftar Meta the bajraktar and Lam Isaku his assistant were much respected and admired but they had no power, on their sole responsibility, to fine a man from Fushaj, their own village. Still less had they power to fine a man from another village in Bulqizë. They could not act in either case
[623] until they had secured the backing of the culprit's village at a general meeting. Nothing less, it was felt, guaranteed the impartiality of the sentence.

693 623 If a bajraktar misconducted himself, all the headmen and commoners of his tribe, or possibly the commoners alone, sat in judgement on him. They could not ostracize, expel or burn him out like an ordinary criminal; he was too inherently a tribal institution for that. But they could, and did fine him. In 1907,[1] the Kryezi tribe assembled in plenary session, one man from each house, and fined its bajraktar and headmen 100 rams and an ox for some judgements they could prove to have been unjustifiable and prejudiced. The commoners could also ask an erring bajraktar to give a rifle or other valuable as security for his good behaviour in the future.

693 The misconduct for which a bajraktar was fined was seldom more heinous than sending his sheep to pasture on another's ground or pronouncing a biased judgement. On the whole, each was so carefully selected and trained by his predecessor in office that he rarely committed the graver crimes. When one did, he was sure to be so 'strong', i.e. influential, that the tribesmen thought it more prudent to close their eyes to his iniquity. There was much grumbling at the venality of bajraktars, but neither the tribal law nor the Turkish government took cognizance of this offence. If
693 a bajraktar[1] serving as judge or arbitrator took a bribe, the only
687 remedy lay in the individual tribesman's freedom to choose another law-giver next time. If a bajraktar accepted a 'present' for doing a favour, there was no remedy at all. His victim could only comfort himself by noting how God, or Allah, punished such greed. It was

[1] See Appendix, Document XII, p. 271.

[1 the bajraktars--Analyst] [2 the local military, administrative and judicial head--Analyst]

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

as King Zog's man and therefore anathema to the Italians, must have lost much ground. Zef Doçi as his enemy and as a good Catholic may have regained some.

According to Albanian tradition there were no bajraktars before the Turks came, and headmen were literally the head men of their tribe. This would seem to be confirmed by a document dated 1403 which cited Alexius Kastrati, as headman of the tribe of that name, in a list of Albanian chiefs who were rewarded by the Venetians with gifts of cloth. Albanian tradition further alleges that the Turks aimed deliberately at weakening Albanian chieftains. So, on the one hand, Sultan Mahmut destroyed thirty-six kins, root and branch, and his son Mexhi a further number. On the other hand, Sultan after Sultan appointed bajraktars, ostensibly as military leaders but really as pillars of Turkish rule. By recognizing their nominees as administrative heads as well as military leaders they reduced the old headmen to a subordinate position, and thereby lessened their chances of engineering a successful revolt. This policy would explain why some bajraktars were social as well as administrative and military leaders, and others were not. The former presumably descended from headmen who were complaisant enough to accept Turkish rule, and the latter from strong men of lower position in tribes where the headmen were recalcitrant. The Turks must have trusted that pleasure in their official rank, and the increased possibilities of money-making would keep the bajraktars quiet in their turn. Recognizing the hereditary character of the bajraktar was another shrewd step on their part. As the non-hereditary delis and spahis aged or died, a hiatus unfavourable to their rule might arise. When it was a case of 'the bajraktar is old or dead, long live the bajraktar', they never lacked an agent. When King Zog, as Minister Ahmed Zogu, began to unify Albania he saw the danger from the numerous bajraktars. Accustomed to lead their tribes to war, unaccustomed to any restraint by a central authority, ignorant and untravelled for the most part and generally of autocratic temper, all of them might not have been willing to submit to the new government in Tirana. Methods of bringing them into line with or without their own wish had, therefore, to be devised. If one was willing to serve loyally, the government treated him as the Turks had long before treated a pliant headman. It made him an officer in the reserve, the modern equivalent of the ancient bajraktar, gave him the half-pay of his rank, and provided

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

CHAPTER XII

ELDERS

It is impossible to understand the laws and customs of the Albanian mountains without a knowledge of the varieties and responsibilities of the elders. A man could be an elder not only in the literal sense but as a legal personage. Seven types developed in sequence one from another among the southern tribes.

Everywhere the word for 'elder' is (sing.) *plak* (plur. *pleq*), which is pure Albanian and means literally 'old man'. There is a corresponding feminine (sing.) *plaka*, 'old woman'. In households of any size there might be several men and women who were really old in years and were 'elders' in the literal sense. These were the first type. The majority were ordinary people and had no legal importance.

The idea of age disappears with the second type, found in every household irrespecuive of its size. Here there were always one man and one woman who bore the special title of 'old man (or elder) of the house' and 'old woman (or elder) of the house'. These under their more usual Albanian titles of master of the household and mistress of the household were not necessarily elders in the sense of 'older people'. They might have attained their position when under forty and have found themselves in authority at that comparatively early age over older men and women.

The third category of elders appeared as soon as a household split up and each brother or male cousin in it acquired his own house. Then, a 'brotherhood' (*vllazni*) was formed. In this community each new house was as much a separate entity as the parent one, and was no longer under the control of the master and mistress, the 'elders' of the old joint home. It had its own 'elders' of both sexes who managed all its affairs, external and internal. The 'old man' of the joint home, now administering a much smaller household, thus lost a proportionate share of his importance. But the new masters also lost some of theirs. So long as the family lived together any competent adult among them might deputise for the master in village or tribal affairs or in the administration of the communal home, but from the day they separated,

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

the old master reserved such business for himself and his sons, leaving only their own concerns to the masters of the new houses. As he remained the eldest or the most capable of the brothers, his help and advice tended to be sought by the others, particularly in external business, and his opinion was more regarded by outsiders such as tribal or government authorities. So he developed into the 'old man (or elder) of the brotherhood'. As the generations passed and the houses of the original brotherhood split up in their turn, the dignity of brotherhood elder remained in his family, handed down inalienably from master to master. The term 'brotherhood elder' was little used, however; 'first (or head) of the brotherhood' was preferred. There was no woman elder of the brotherhood or any larger unit. The mistress of the household of a brotherhood elder had neither authority nor influence outside his house, as he had. She was a foreign importation into the brotherhood, a stranger to it in blood, her only duties being to bear her husband's children and to work in the house, her only rights proceeding from her fulfilment of those duties.

In course of time so many households split up that a number of new brotherhoods were formed. In some the sense of brotherhood or even cousinship with the others faded, and only a remoter feeling of kinship due to descent from a common ancestor persisted. The agglomeration of brotherhoods then constituted a 'kin' (*fis*). In this, the fourth type, each brotherhood retained its own elder, and at the same time looked up to the elder of the original brotherhood as leader, calling him 'elder of the kin' or 'head of the kin'.

In the next, fifth stage of development several kins united to form a village. They might be distantly related to each other as in the village of Vuksanaj in Shalë, or of quite different stock as in the village of Nangë in Lumë. If related, they remembered which kin descended from the eldest brother in the ancestral home and regarded the elder of that kin as the village elder. If not related, they selected one of the kin elders, preferably the head of the strongest kin, for that position. Alternative names for him were 'senior elder', 'senior headman' and 'head elder'. According to the usual pattern of development each kin and each brotherhood in the village retained its own elder. Already it is possible to understand such data as the following. In the tribe of Lurë there were twelve elders, two for each kin. In the village of Perlat there were two men called village elders or senior elders; in the last days

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

of Turkish rule these were the famous law-givers Dedë Lleshi and Likë Gjegjaj. Again, when Per Dedë Ndoj was senior headman of the village of Gojan in Mirditë, he took the lead in publicly executing a man of his own kin, Buçaj, for murdering a guest who belonged to the Martinaj kin in the same village. The story is related by Father Gjeçov.

This fifth type was the recognized superior of the sixth, the body of men who were unitedly called 'village elders'. These consisted of all the brotherhood and kin elders in the village as well as the village elder himself. For instance, in the district of Kurbin there were sixteen villages, each of which had its 'head (or village) elder'. But according to a document published on p. 129 of Father Gjeçov's book there were altogether forty-five elders in Kurbin. Besides the sixteen 'head elders' there were twenty-nine ordinary 'village elders', some of them kin elders and some brotherhood elders. In Mirditë these village elders were known as 'canon elders', because it was their business to see that the law was respected and applied. To avoid confusion between the single village elder and the body of village elders these will henceforth be alluded to as canon elders.

The document mentioned by Father Gjeçov introduces us to the seventh type, a personage styled 'chief elder'. In the document he was chief of the 'forty-five elders of the region of Krujë' (i.e. Kurbin). There is no explicit information of how his position came to this man or whether it was hereditary in his family. It can only be inferred that as he was a Përvizi of Skuraj, and this family led Kurbin, the position was hereditary and a tribute to the outstanding strength of his family. In so large an area as Kurbin there could not be any question of all the villages being related by blood and owning allegiance to Përvizi as the descendant, master after master, of the master of the ancestral household. In other districts where a chief elder existed, it may be assumed similarly that he owed his position to the personal qualities of his family rather than to its descent.

Some other kinds of elder were found, both among the southern tribes and elsewhere, but it will be easier to understand their position after the characteristics and functions which were common to the elders have been elucidated.

Viewed as a human being, an elder was an ordinary man without privileges other than the corner seat, head of the roasted animal

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

and first cup of coffee, which were offered to any man of standing. 554
He lived in the same style as the rest of his social unit and was their equal in the eyes of the law. The latter point was clearer in the old days. If he were killed an ordinary blood feud ensued; if this was compounded, the price of his blood was no higher than an ordinary man's. If he killed someone, his life was forfeit in the usual manner to his victim's family. If he committed a crime against the community, he was liable to the usual punishments for such a crime and could be asked to give the community a rifle or other recognized article as security for his good behaviour in future. He had also the same social obligations as humbler tribesmen. These included serving in the tribal 'army', feeding the tribal 'youth', doing forced labour for the government, sharing communal labour for the village, and subscribing to public objects like buying an extra piece of communal pasturage or forest. He had also, like common men, to do military service and work annually without payment for a short period on the roads.

As a legal personage, however, an elder was on a higher footing 693
than ordinary tribesmen. If, for instance, a village elder were to 622
witness an oath in a case grave enough to require twenty-four 613
jurors, his single person counted as the twelve jurors who were left unspecified by the judging elder. Another elder did not count as high, for a village elder ranked higher than a kin elder, and the latter higher than a brotherhood elder. An elder's duties were twofold, administrative and legal. The former were an expansion of the master's, for he had to take the same fatherly care of his brotherhood, kin or village that a master took of his household and had to run it on much the same system. On the external side he had to present its case skilfully to higher authorities and defend it from oppression. Internally he must maintain law and order by checking the chief evils, assassination and damage to property. He had to try to nip quarrels in the bud by persuasive reasoning, arbitrate when they menaced and judge when they developed. He had to lend the weight of his presence not only to the giving of an oath but also to the bequeathing of a legacy to church or mosque, the planting of boundary stones, and (generally) the separation of brothers. The embodiment of the tribal law, he was at once advocate, judge and law-giver.

An elder's age and wealth did not matter to the ordinary 613
members of his social unit, who drew no invidious comparisons 554
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10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGI Albania EGI

between him and themselves on those grounds. Provided he was correctly descended from the master of the ancestral household through a succession of what were conventionally called 'eldest' brothers, and were really the most competent, they accepted him as their elder as unquestioningly as the English nation accepts its king. Sometimes a new elder seemed unfit for his duties. Then the others took him with them when they went to work, and told him how his dead father judged or arbitrated: the most telling and least offensive method of training him.

When a dispute occurred it was the duty of the aggrieved party to inform his brotherhood elder first of all. When he did so and the matter was trifling and lay between two members of his brotherhood, this elder judged the case out of hand. If the disputants belonged to different brotherhoods, he consulted with the elder of the second brotherhood. When the case was graver he carried it to his kin elder, who might judge it straight away or carry it to the village elder. The village elder might in his turn pronounce judgement forthwith or call a General Assembly of the village in order to thrash the matter out in public and get a backing for any decision taken. Often the aggrieved party went straight to the village elder who was accessible to all tribesmen. In that event neither his kin nor his brotherhood had the right to resent the man's going over their heads. Moreover, the village elder's superiority was so well established that no resentment was likely to be felt. In no case was it lawful for an aggrieved man to seek advice from an elder in an outside village before he had consulted one of his own. If a kin elder or the brotherhood elders in the kin oppressed others in the village it was the duty of the village elder to repress them; and he had the right to summon the elders of the other kins in the village, if necessary, to his support. Article 10 in the Convention of Kurbin[1] betrays a strong feeling that there must be no shooting until the village elder has been informed of the dispute and given a chance to settle it by quieter means.

Elders could also act collectively. In the old days no new law could be passed, nor any judgement affecting their social unit be pronounced, unless they were present and gave their approval. When the bajraktar summoned a General Assembly for such important purposes as concluding a truce, trying a serious case or enacting new laws of tribal behaviour, their attendance was

[1] See Appendix, Document XI, p. 271.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

compulsory. Any who failed to attend and could not justify their absence were fined. Together with the general public, they had to investigate complaints against a senior elder or a bajraktar, and if they found him guilty, they had to fine or ostracize him. In their attempts to prevent breaches of the peace they were entitled to try any method from peaceful persuasion to forcible restraint by the whole village. When, for instance, a tribesman refused to accept a judgement that was demonstrably lawful and unbiased, they could call a General Assembly to discuss the case. A public fine generally ended the man's obduracy. If not, the village elders could ask all the headmen and 'soldiers' of the tribe to come and bring him to his senses by threatening to destroy his house and property. They continued to apply the old law, the public preferring these methods to those of modern officials.

Canon elders were subordinate to the bajraktar and the voivodes of their tribe, acting as their assistants at General Assemblies.

In non-tribal districts like Shpat and Martanesh the canon elders of Mirditë were represented by a body of men called 'local elders'. These were hereditary, found in every village and restricted in their law-giving to their own village.

Another type were called 'specialist elders' in the southern tribal areas, 'regional elders' or 'mountain elders' in Martanesh, and plain 'elders' in Theth. The great majority owed nothing to heredity and everything to themselves, being ordinary men who had gradually built up a reputation for good sense, conciliatory temper and especially knowledge of the mountain law. A few were hereditary elders who had displayed the same qualities. Except in a few unusual cases they did not hand on their gifts or their position. As it required time to build up their reputation, the generality were older than herditary elders when they attained this position. They began by settling petty troubles within their brotherhood and gradually as their reputation grew, they extended their sphere of action to their kin, village and district in succession. A brotherhood elder must not interfere in another brotherhood, a kin elder in another kin or a 'local elder' of Martanesh in another village. But the specialists might travel far and wide outside their own social unit judging and arbitrating wherever required. Provided that they judged according to the law, their judgements were binding and overrode any delivered previously by a local man. As gifted men do not arise at will, they were never common but were found only

10:Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EG1 Albania EG1

693 here and there. After the introduction of modern codes of justice
622 they had little chance to emerge.
634 Above all elders, in both Mirditë and the adjacent tribes, came the Gjomarkaj family. This family was regarded as the source of all knowledge of the mountain law and represented the final court of appeal. The villagers of Martanesh carried many of their graver troubles to its head, but at the same time had often a 'special elder' whom they consulted in such cases. Selim Peshku, who died about 1910, was the latest example. The tree under which he sat dispensing justice in Martanesh is still shown. In the north the bishop
[793] or a specially gifted priest was the ultimate referee. They were consulted not so much for their knowledge of the law but because of their reputation for probity.

623 Functionally the brotherhood elders of Mirditë were represented in the Malësi e Madhe by the 'ward elders', who ruled and judged in their own small community, the village ward in which they lived.
651 They were more commonly called *gjobtarë* ('fine-collectors') from their primary function of collecting fines. As legal functionaries they resembled specialist elders rather than brotherhood elders because they were ordinary tribesmen and owed their position as elders, not to hereditary right, but to special appointment. They were selected, however, not by the public like the specialists, but by the local bajraktar or voivode. On taking up an appointment to judge or arbitrate they were known as 'soul elders', on account of the solemn phrases with which they were commissioned. The commissioning bajraktar or voivode first asked, 'Do you pledge your souls, elders, that it was so?' On receiving their assent he laid a stone on the ground before them, saying, 'With body and soul, with a stone in front of you and with God's justice set these two people straight in any way that you can see'. It goes without saying that only upright men were willing or were asked to accept a charge laden with such danger to their soul after death. These northern ward elders had no connexion with the ward elders of Godolesh near Elbasan, who were seven in number for the six wards (mëhallë), all subordinate to the paid non-hereditary headman and his two assistants.

695 Another functional type, which was most important for the repression of crime and was found everywhere, was constituted by 'juror elders'. When trying a case, the judging elders might decide to make one of the disputants take an oath that he was not guilty.

10: Hasluck F-5 (1926-1939)1954 EGl Albania EGl

each seeking their support. Had four refused at this stage to take the oath Asllan would at once have been publicly convicted—if less than four, two substitutes would have had to be produced for every one that refused; two for one, four for two, and six for three, and there would have been no extension of the time limit. In this case, however, all the compurgators agreed to swear to Asllan's innocence, and he himself, towards the end of the week, swore on the Koran that he had nothing to do with the theft. Later the compurgators, led by Qazim's nominees, took the oath of Asllan's innocence before the whole village. Actually, Qazim cut short the proceedings after six or seven had sworn, as by then the compurgators most likely to know the truth had sworn to the suspect's innocence.

Having celebrated his acquittal with a banquet to the compurgators, Asllan two days later yoked the stolen ox, hidden during the case in a lonely sheepfold, to his plough. Now, although the mistake—either designed or accidental—of the compurgators was obvious, there was no legal machinery for annulling the verdict. In the opinion of the village, however, Asllan received his punishment when shortly afterwards his son was born lame.[1]

Qazim in Labinot put his case into the hands of the headman of his village. In the tribal north he would have entrusted it to the elder of his brotherhood, ward or village or perhaps to the bajraktar of his tribe.

Tribal officials, being hereditary, had more authority to act for their community than had the temporary headman in non-tribal districts such as Labinot. In Milot, the most northerly village of Kurbin, the victim tackled the suspect himself, asking him first if he had committed the outrage and then if he would take oath that he had not. In view of the fieriness of Albanian tempers this information is surprising—one would expect shooting to put an abrupt end to such an interview—but it is confirmed by information from the neighbouring village of Laç. When one of its inhabitants denied having received a loan, the lender asked him directly to swear in the presence of two or three witnesses that he had never been lent the money.

Only men of military age and capacity had standing enough to

[1] A very similar system of compurgators exists among the Naga tribes of Assam. There, however, though in some tribes there is no means of modifying the verdict if an oath prove to be false, in others a compurgator who discovers that his principal is lying can 'withdraw his life', otherwise in danger from the false oath, and so reopen the case *ab initio*. (Ed.)